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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ ELECTIONS - DEVELOPMENTS IN JORDAN

REF: A. AMMAN 00185

[B](#). AMMAN 00150

[C](#). 04 AMMAN 09898

Classified By: CDA David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

SUMMARY

[1](#)1. (SBU) The GOJ publicly rejected a non-binding parliamentary resolution against Iraqi campaigning and voting in Jordan. King Abdullah and senior Jordanian officials continue to issue strong statements in support of the January 30 elections despite protests from the Islamic Action Front and its allies. The out-of-country voting program in Jordan run by the IOM is reportedly on schedule to start registration January 17 for up to 200,000 eligible Iraqis. Voter outreach efforts, including television ads, are underway, but may be lagging. A two-person team from the International Mission for the Iraqi Elections (IMIE) has established its local office, but seems focused on future elections to come after the January 30 polling. End summary.

GOJ STANDS FIRM AGAINST CRITICS OF IRAQI ELECTIONS

[1](#)2. (U) Opposition elements in Jordan, led by the Islamic Action Front (IAF) and the highly-politicized professional associations, have expressed strong disapproval of the elections in Iraq scheduled for January 30. On January 9 the IAF attacked the results of the January 6 Iraq neighbors' conference in Amman (ref A), charging that the conference communiqué only served to further the illegitimate U.S. occupation of Iraq. The statement called on Arab governments to stop all cooperation with the Iraqi Interim Government and to support the Iraqi "resistance" which, it alleged, was representative of the Iraqi people. The IAF expressed its appreciation for the non-binding resolution passed by the Jordanian parliament opposing the placement of banners and posters encouraging Iraqis in Jordan to register to vote in the elections (ref B). Jordan's professional associations, a close ally of the IAF on many issues, added their voice by sponsoring a non-violent rally January 9 condemning U.S. alleged atrocities in Iraq and praising the "heroic forces of resistance" in Fallujah.

[1](#)3. (U) On January 10 Government Spokesperson Asma Khader rejected Parliament's complaints about electoral campaigning for Iraqis. While noting that the government "respects deputies' points of view," Khader stated that there were no legal grounds to ban the voter registration media campaign. She further noted that the upcoming Iraqi elections were "a very important step" in the reconstruction of Iraq and that preservation of Iraq's national unity required "participation of all Iraqi people in the elections." During a December 2004 interview with the press, Khader had stressed that Jordan backed all efforts to hold Iraqi elections on time.

[1](#)4. (U) King Abdullah and other Jordanian leaders have repeatedly and publicly affirmed Jordan's endorsement of the January 30 elections while encouraging all Iraqis to vote. For example, the press quoted the King telling Iraq's neighboring foreign ministers during the January 6 Amman conference that the elections "are the embodiment of the Iraqis' will in determining their future." In an interview with a Kuwaiti daily early this month, the King highlighted the need for all Iraqis to participate in the elections and denied charges that he was anti-Shia. Foreign Minister al-Mulki, after meeting with visiting EU High Representative Javier Solana, told the press January 9 that Jordan was fully supportive of the upcoming elections, saying they were necessary to build a free and democratic Iraq. Mulki earlier gave an interview to Al-Quds Al-Arabi, reprinted in the local press, that emphasized strongly the importance of the Iraqi elections and the need for every Iraqi, especially the Sunnis, to take part in them. Most recently, Prime Minister al-Fayez, during a visit to Saudi Arabia on January 11, publicly renewed Jordan's call for all Iraqis to cast ballots in the January 30 elections.

REACHING OUT TO IRAQI VOTERS

15. (SBU) Richard Scott, project manager for the out-of-country (OCV) program run by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), confirmed to PolOff January 11 that Iraqi voter registration in Jordan is on schedule for January 17-23. Scott said that according to IOM estimates, there are roughly 200,000 eligible Iraqi voters in Jordan. Jordan has the second-largest population of eligible Iraqis, after Syria. He expressed confidence that registration centers would accommodate possible crowds, but admitted that "if they all decide to show up on the 23rd, we're going to have a problem."

16. (SBU) In a separate conversation, OCV external relations director Monique Degroot told PolOff that television advertisements on voter registration began running January 8 to complement radio ads that started December 20. In addition to Jordan TV, she said ads are being broadcast on satellite networks (to include channels such as MBC, LBC, and Al Arabiya) in order to reach Iraqis residing in all countries that will participate in the OCV program. Degroot said that the IOM has sponsored several informational meetings in east Amman for the Iraqi community in Jordan, but that they were unable to distribute the list of candidates as they had not yet received the names from the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI).

17. (C) When asked about voter awareness among local Iraqis, Abdul al-Malki of the Iraqi Embassy in Amman told PolOff January 11 that he had not seen or heard any radio or TV ads on the voting process. He elaborated that Iraqis in Jordan were flooding the Embassy with phone inquiries on candidates and registration procedures and locations. Malki privately questioned whether there was sufficient time to reach and educate potential voters so as to help ensure a solid turnout.

IMIE ON THE GROUND IN AMMAN

18. (SBU) EmbOffs paid a visit January 11 to the new IMIE secretariat in Jordan, currently staffed by two independent

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Canadian election consultants. Grant Kippen, the lead consultant, said that since arriving in Amman on January 7, he and his colleague had been setting up an office (an Amman hotel room) and contacting diplomatic missions and NGOs. He explained that the IMIE's mandate was still not completely defined; they were "flying by the seat of our pants." Kippen said that the IMIE currently envisioned a limited assessment operation designed to provide recommendations for later Iraqi elections to follow the January 30 polling, rather than a large-scale monitoring mission that would "judge" the election outcome. According to Kippen, the IMIE hoped to find and hire "a few" experienced international election consultants to lead IMIE activities in Iraq, though he added that security conditions could make this difficult. The IMIE additionally plans to recruit local hires in each of the countries where out-of-country voting will take place to look at registration procedures and polling outside Iraq.

19. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
HALE